

Rev John Tyler

AN

R A T I O N,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF

CINCINNATI,

HARTFORD, July 4, 1794.

By ELIJAH WATERMAN.

K

All governments labor under incurable disorders. The affairs of mortals are desperate: they will never know happiness till philosophy takes them under her guidance. Plato.

I am the light of the world.

Christ.



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By HUNTER AND GOODWIN.

MDCXCIV.

*Presented by his humble servant
President of the society
Cincinnati*

State of Connecticut.

HARTFORD, 4th July, 1794.

SOCIETY of CINCINNATI.

VOTED, that Maj. SEYMOUR, and Mr. BEERS, be, and they are hereby appointed a Committee to wait on Mr. WATERMAN, and return him the Thanks of this Society for his ORATION delivered before them this Day, and to request a Copy of the same for publication, at the Expence of said Society.

Extract from the Minutes,

E. KIRBY, Secretary.





AN ORATION.



CITIZENS OF UNITED AMERICA,

THE story of Independence has been often told: age makes it more venerable: to latest posterity it will be the richest patrimony.

REPLETE with sentiment, this triumph of liberty over oppression, can never be unpleasing to the mind, that is anxious to annihilate the miseries of man, nor tedious to the bosom, that delights to enlarge the sphere of felicity.

ON the morning of the seventeenth century, our pious ancestors landed on this uncultivated country. Immediately dependent on each other, emergency dictated their proceedings. Like a connected family their object was mutual benefit. Industry and frugality resulted from their situation. The forests were subdued, and their enemies retired before them. Religion was the darling object of their souls; they guarded her with a

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feeling and a jealous eye. They instructed each other ; they instructed their children. At a proper distance from the splendor of courts and the contagion of nobility ; they were possessed of a manly honesty, which warranted them to examine the conduct of others, with the minuteness of philosophy. Masters of themselves, generations were matured upon the grounds of equality. Towns were incorporated and societies established. Officers were appointed and respected. Differences were examined and adjusted. Free from the trammels of system and the rich chicanery of law, they varied their institutions with their circumstances, reformed and improved, not so much because individuals regarded the good of the whole, as that each was resolute to preserve his own particular rights. Disputes gave origin to enquiry ; this led to truth, to justice. Superstition might mislead, and the glooms of bigotry might sometimes prevail ; but repeated necessity to examine without the shackles of *precedent*, gave gradually to religion more of her native beauty, her charms and her cheerfulness. This western world, was designed by our God, as the garden where man should again vegetate, and recover to himself his native powers. Like the trees of the forest, they grew up at random, they received their nourishment, they communicated their blessings. But like the wild luxuriance of the forest, the nature of man requires regulation and restraint. Government is essential to his security. Happiness must be promoted by the encouragement of virtue. Industry must be animated by the security of reaping the fruit of her labors. In extending the principles of town corporations, to the government of a province, the piety of our ancestors, was blended with zeal, and every movement was de-

signed as a step towards heaven. Civil policy was engrafted upon religion ; it found an able support, without being too rigid or too austere for the credulity of the age. The colonies successively received the precepts, without the example of Britain. They safely learnt the principles of her government, without the iniquity of her practice. While her chariot of empire was rolled along by the springs of bribery and intrigue ; while her sons were indulging in excess, idling in prophanity, or travelling without improvement : the youth of America were entering their colleges ; diverting themselves by rival feats of bodily strength—were discussing the principles of law and the rights of men—were cultivating their fields and rejoicing in the hope of harvest. When retired from their labours, they listened, they heard, they examined. They were educated soldiers without knowing the cruelties of a military establishment ; they were freemen without knowing the evils of oppression.

SUCH were the diverging circumstances of the two countries. As opposite in their interest as they were distant in their situation. The one increased in knowledge, virtue and wealth. The other grew old in pride, oppression and venality. The progression of each was gradual. The long race of causes had been multiplying. Arbitrary power more than once commenced and suspended her operations. Under the smooth formal guise of right, the sagacity of self-taught Americans discovered the vile progress of despotic slavery. Their feeling remonstrance was answered by contempt, while the cords of oppression were drawn still harder ; till the arms of Britain appeared on our shore. The hearts of men, distinguishing be-

tween right and wrong, reason and oppression, which had been early strung to the notes of liberty, were now played into unison by the guardian angel of our country.

The patriot flame with quick contagion ran,
Hill lighted hill, and man electrified man.*

But we approach the era of Independence—shall I pass the venerable scene and bow to superiors who have delineated the glories of *seventy-six*. Why should I lead you through the carnage of war—scenes where many of you have been active—where the valiant have fallen—and the mighty have ceased from their labors. It is a tale of woe, of joy, through seven long years—when the happiness of ages was put to issue, between the infant spirit of liberty, and the minions of blood-nourished tyranny. Why should I mention the unequal contest—and not point you to the God of armies—when you behold the collected hosts of Britain piling their arms on the field of submission: their navy retiring with infamy from our shores, leaving us in the possession of ourselves, in the possession of liberty, of independence. It is enough, we fought but for “peace, liberty and safety.” Our expectations were more than gratified. The sword returned to its scabbard: the implements of death to their place: and our warriors, like Cincinnatus, to their domestic concerns, carrying with them the affection of brothers, the attachments of those who had fought side by side, who had been companions of danger and partners of victory. They parted, but it was an hour—let the painter catch the scene and present at once the minds of heroes agitated with the *termination* of their long shared toils and social pleasures; and with the gloomy fear of ingratitude from their country.

* Darwin.

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THE morning of independence opened, but not without clouds. The sun arose, but the political horizon was obscure. It was a delicate moment, in which the opinions of many were anxiously suspended. When our enemies predicted that we should work out our destruction. For as tyrants cannot subsist without slaves, so they concluded that we could not live without masters. But the American revolution was the establishment of our liberties. It was not a revolution of opinion, not a change of sentiments. We had not our information to collect from the precedent of ages: not our opinions to form upon bare prejudices; we had not to encounter the delirium of habits, and an education upon the principles of slavery. But a people whose sentiments were formed by the religion of equality, and worn deeply into the mind by a seven years bloody defence, knew at once, both how to estimate and how to secure their safety. Hence an event the most majestic, which could have happened in no age, but the close of the eighteenth—in no country but united America. That four millions of people should possess that clear discernment and sober thought; which impelled them, upon the most bold and intrepid discussion, to form a federal government, which should channel the flowings of commerce; check the selfish spirit of individual states; draw into one view the different interests of the whole, and which should at the same time define and reduce to practice the complicated principles of national security and happiness. This bulwark of liberty has been celebrated—but it practically confers on itself the most complete eulogium.

Thus anticipating the period which theory had defined: independent America, the rich heiress

of the western world, with a healthy and a vigorous constitution, holds an envied rank among the family of empires. She no longer stands by herself; her interest and her welfare become interwoven with those of other nations. The different policies of Britain and of France, amid the convulsions of war, *shoulder* upon her the necessity of examining their conduct and the principles of their proceedings, that she may not grant too many favors to the one, nor receive too many insults from the other.

WE may recollect the awful moment, when the polite sagacity of Frenchmen reached the arm of friendship, and gave to America salvation from slavery, and from death. They have sought her alliance. They have interestedly, but honourably, courted her smiles and attention. Enamored with the blessings and the privileges which were secured to her, they desired to taste the same joys; to drink of the streams of liberty, and to eat the bread of equality.

THEIR exertions were proportioned to the accomplishment of their object. Their successes have been unparalleled. History yields no precedent. The contest of America was but a tournament in comparison. Ere she started in the career, France had to burst the chains of arbitrary power; to loosen the long riveted shackles of habit; to scatter the dark shades of superstition; to invigorate the minds of millions by the light of science: and to make a total revolution in opinion, before she could make a permanent revolution in government.

FRENCHMEN have manifested a superior ge-

nus ; the talent of turning every incident to their advantage, and every occurrence to the promotion of their designs. Even those events, the gregarious combinations of tyrants, which seemed to threaten a total destruction to their liberty, have been the means of eradicating the seeds of royalty, and of giving unity of design to their national proceeding.

PASSING the frothy declamations of a Burke, no one may deny, that the government of *eighty-nine*, deeply contemplated the happiness of the people and the glory of the nation. How far ultimately they will have deviated from this great object, cannot be so precisely determined. The humane, the generous mind would have wished that their object might have been accomplished, without that cruelty, havock and barbarity, which must blacken many pages of their history. When I speak of a king, I speak of a man like myself : I attach nothing to him but the rights of an individual. The authority of nations is supreme ; their judgment is the last appeal ; but in this, they cannot controul the principles of justice, nor sport with the life of an individual. Circumstances can alone determine the lawfulness or necessity, of taking the life of a man, whose generosity of heart was the originating source of his misfortune.

BUT when France must part with her liberties, or part with her king who shall hesitate to determine. We might drop a generous tear, over the misfortunes of French royalty—but our regret and anxiety are bespoken to a still more distressing scene, where religion and science are entomb-

ed together. Come hither, ye who have experienced the labour of knowledge, who know the value of liberty, the blessings of christianity,—but tread with caution. France has extinguished the light of the world ; and for the prospect of immortality she presents a universal blank :—existence is no longer a blessing, virtue is no longer amiable. Ye benefactors, ye lovers of mankind collect your compassion, weep, for the glory of France is departed. Emerging from the glooms of benighted popery, she has travelled to the extremes of infidelity, to midnight credulity. She affords the world the first example, that a nation without religion is a curse to itself, and harbours in its bosom, the violent contortions of dissoluton. The streets of her capital are drenched in blood. Her citizens mad to fury, seeking for some miserable victim which may be sacrificed to their rage, by an atheistical tribunal, who give judgment without mercy, and inflict death without justice. Come hither ye statesmen and legislators ; ye who are intrusted with the happiness of millions, and learn to reverence that religion which inculcates the principles of peace, forgiveness and charity ; which clears the mind from the painfulness of suspense, and the glooms of annihilation ; which gives a hope to the wicked, forgiveness to the penitent, and a reward to the righteous—which is the support of morality, and the fountain of national felicity.

FRANCE has abjured her religion at a moment, when she has the strongest necessity for its restraints. This throws a dark shade over her proceedings, and makes the friends of her cause, tremble for the event. But that satisfaction, which probability and conjecture cannot give, is

derived alone from the certainty, that there is a providence, which teaches events to know their places, the supreme character of which is to bring good out of evil. France may wander from the way, violence and iniquity may usurp the place of truth and justice ; but the object for which she contends is founded upon the principles of righteousness. It is therefore with greater certainty we look forward to its accomplishment : Its accomplishment ! my country, should they fail—should they be subjected, you will stand the next victim for the altar of tyranny. Your garments will be next parted among the crucifiers of liberty. For look at the countenance of Britain—and what is there, but injury and insult ? Palliations for her conduct against France, both mean and trifling. For at the moment, when the enemies of the ancient despotism, were willing and anxious to support the limited power of the king, as recommended by the convention ; when foreign force and domestic faction increased each others exasperation. It was then France appealed to Britain,* for counsel and instruction—she refused to mediate. She would not extend the friendly hand of accommodation, to give permanency to that government which the people and the king had freely adopted ; nor to prevent foreign invasion, nor the anarchy which would roll itself in blood. They suffered, for they might have prevented the certain consequence of an invasion—the death of Louis : yet they make his death a political cover for spreading the horrors of war. Here is the boasted humanity of degenerate Britain. To revenge the death of the man whom they would not protect, they delib-

* Mr. Fox.

erately sign a death warrant for the slaughter of millions.

WE may look into Paris and see heads falling from the guillotine. We may look into the parliament of England, and see the same illegal cruelties perpetrated in a more genteel and royal manner. However unrighteously the convention of France may have conducted. How many crimes soever they may have committed—does justice or humanity, demand their crimes to be visited upon an innocent people? Has a nation erred, and shall the despots of Germany undertake to define the error and to correct it? Shall those ignorant imperial robbers attempt to define the rights of the descendents of the ancient Franks: That race of heroes whose posterity have not till now known the value of freedom—who for centuries have forgotten the spirit of their fathers: who are bold and valiant to the verge of temerity; who rush headlong against the enemy, without deigning to compute his numbers or their own; in whose eyes a retreat is shameful, a flight indelible infamy.*

Do these butchers of mankind calculate to visit the same broad calamities upon such a race of men, as they have upon the wretchedly unfortunate Polanese? Do they wish for the coffers of another empire to support their iniquity? Has Britain anticipated enormously the revenues of her posterity, and does she wish to indemnify them at the expence of France? I ask the question—were the combined powers anxious for the life of Louis? The answer need not too far insinuate from indicative

* Gibbon.

circumstances, that the emigrant princes, the c-devant nobles and the nonjuring clergy, wished for the death of the man who had not iniquity enough to support them in their exclusive privileges ; nor how far the conspiring despots might desire the death of the man, who, if they succeeded, would be an obstruction to the partition of the kingdom. Did the success of France endanger the safety of Holland ? And was Britain obligated to protect her ? She is now secure, and the war is direct and offensive against the rights of Frenchmen, against liberty at large. Where then will a British minister seek a palliation for throwing the nation into the convulsions of war ? Does that church and state which ought to be renovated, fear the event will be fatal to their powers ? Does the head lie uneasy that wears a crown ? Is that sinning-word *reformation*, harsh and grating to the ear of royalty. Then let not an accumulation of crimes, hasten the period he wishes to avoid. The days of revolution are commenced. The new order of events is proceeding. The temple of science is opened ; and the highway is laid out for liberty. Tyrants, would you escape destruction ? Then lend your assistance ; make your subjects citizens ; heal the wound you have inflicted ; live like honest men, and learn the luxury of doing good !

Is not the principle on which Britain wars against France, a principle equally hostile to all liberty and all righteous government. How should it be otherwise ? The court of St. James is the sink of venality, where kings rule and nobles decree iniquity. We may revere the British nation, considered as a people, who have enlarged the bounds of science, and given lustre to the genius

of man. But their parliament is the most detestable ; it originates and exists from venality. As a political body, they give us answers but for evasion. And while our government endeavor to walk upon the strictest principles of neutrality, they, like the pestilence, walk in darkness ; and while by free commerce they suck the treasures of the continent, seize the sacred property of individuals, and under the shadow of legal adjudication appropriate it to their use. It is unparralleled meanness—infamous perfidy. It outrages the annals of piracy. It stands more than in competition with the conduct of that nation, in supplying the western tribes, both with the means and disposition to destroy our infant settlements. Can we be calm under such provoking injuries, such insults and such robberies. Yes, our moderation has been known—our patience tried. We wish for peace, we know too well the miseries of war : We ask for satisfaction : There is a point beyond which our forbearance cannot extend—when war becomes a blessing—and when waged with pirates, justifiable—when the spirits of our fathers, would rise to defend the liberties of their posterity, from the gloomy grasp of oppression. Can Americans forget their rights ? Forget the era of seventy six ? My country, can you forget too the wretchedness, misery and destruction which war brings and entails upon a nation. Your wounds are scarcely healed. The glorious calamities of independence are not removed. There is a middle way between cowardice and revenge. It is the path of honour. Show then that you not only have the spirit to resent the insolence, but the energy to correct the perfidy of Britain. At the same time, manifest an untaught example, that you will never sacrifice your happiness and prosperity as a peo-

ple, to the caprices of pride or the royal punctilios of honor. The condemnation of your vessels, separate from the violence upon national confidence, and the meanness of the insult, is trifling compared to the calamities of war. Your shipping has been chained to your ports, but in your dwellings have been peace and plenty. Make not the conduct of other nations, a rule for your proceedings. Mankind have been long enough chained to the principles of iniquity, to the *honor* of murdering each other, by no other reason, but the precedent authority of their fathers. From Nimrod to Pitt, fraud and robbery have been the great mysteries of government. War has been the inseparable business of statesmen. And what is it? It is an accumulation of all the miseries and all the vices that can afflict or ruin a people. It originates from selfish policy and is carried on by injustice. Such are the consequences; such are the principles of war. There is an everlasting alliance between iniquity and misery. True policy ever proceeds upon the principles of justice. And the people who rest their conduct upon these, in every change of circumstances, will have a foundation which will never fail.

WHEN we look back upon departed empires, and learn their existence from their ruins, a dismal horror thrills the soul. They speak to us the forcible language of truth: that the same iniquity which prompted them to destroy their neighbors, gradually produced their own dissolution. This is an infallible maxim: that the people who practice injustice upon others, are sharpening the weapon, that will cut the very nerves of their own existence: to have peace and happiness, nations must reverence the princi-

ples of virtue. They must be honest and just. Our venerable ancestors have taught us that knowledge and virtue are the guardians of liberty. And your minds have been purposely led on this day, over the manners and proceedings of your fathers; that from facts you might learn the origin and permanent principles of a happy government, which in the settlements of New-England are more forcibly illustrated, than they ever have been by the most ingenious theories and utopian speculations.

AMERICANS should ever watch the causes which produced their revolution, which produced the declaration of independence. That this truth may be practically inculcated upon their minds—to preserve their rights and liberties, they must tenaciously adhere to the same principles, by which they were originated and perfected. Whatever has been the foundation of their independence, must still be preserved as the permanent basis of their security and future happiness. The mind, when it reflects that former nations have uniformly travelled in the road to ruin, is anxious to know, if there is not some way through which we may walk in safety, and continue our existence as a happy people till time shall be no longer. On this subject many conjectures have been made. But the experience of six generations since the settlement of this country, will permit us to draw this positive conclusion: that as long as the principles of christianity are inculcated upon the minds of people: as long as the infant draws virtue and industry from the breast of the mother: as long as the spirit of education which now prevails in Connecticut, shall pervade the federal empire, so long will this nation avoid the poison

of luxury, the distraction of parties and the oppression of power ; so long will they grow in strength and continue a monument of this truth, that virtue and knowledge are inseparably connected with happiness.

WE glory in our revolution, we triumph in the blessings of liberty ; but in vain shall we boast of these, if we do not inculcate upon the minds of posterity, the manly and industrious sentiments of our fathers. If labour is not honorable, if knowledge is not diffused, and virtue engrafted on the tender mind—the melancholy era will come, when vice and contention, faction and misery, will distract and enslave this empire.

Does the conduct of one generation determine the happiness of another ; and shall the rising generations be forgotten ? Reverence your children, was a heathen maxim : yet christians must embrace it, for it is the law of nature. What but our religion and the diffusion of knowledge, has lead us to the happiness which we now enjoy ? An happiness, which when compared to that of France or Britain, or any nation on earth, has a superiority, which is not to be calculated.—Looking to our federal government, we find the first man on earth—the man who has conducted to the satisfaction of his country—to the admiration of the world, “ who is equally entitled to our esteem and affection, whether we view him at the head of our armies, leading them to victory—or at the head of our councils, exerting his constitutional authority to preserve the blessings of peace. No man has acted a more distinguished and glorious part on the theatre of human life—and the per-

fonal characters of all the kings in the world appear contemptible, when put in comparison with the virtues and the talents of this illustrious patriot."*

IF we examine the several departments of government, we shall find but a few solitary members who want ability, integrity and science, and who are not ambitious to obtain the confidence of their fellow citizens, by boldly pursuing their welfare. When we examine the principles of our constitution, the prosperity it has conferred upon our country, shall we not exert our united ability to give it energy, permanency and support. Our rulers are chosen from among us; our interest is theirs: shall we then hesitate to confide in their wisdom, and to abide by their counsels.

MAY not every serious friend to his country, who feels the necessity of a stable and energetic government, ask the democratic societies, and the jacobin clubs, the brooders of faction, who wish by their resolves, to guide the affairs of the empire, and to erect the standard of anarchy, if they solemnly wish to work their own destruction, and entail misery and wretchedness in their country? It is in moments the most critical, on circumstances most hazardous; that the true patriot will proceed with sober thought, prudent delay, and the genuine *Yankee* spirit of enquiry.† It is

* Letter from a member of Congress, to a gentleman in Hartford.

† Many conjectures have been made, with regard to the derivation of the word *yankee*, as applied in particular to the people of New-England.—Among others is this; that there was a tribe of Indians, called the Yankooz:—designating that they were a brave and hardy race of warriors.—Hence this word, by some circumstance, was pertinently applied to the inhabitants of New-England.

when the interest and welfare of millions hang upon the opinions of rulers, that every action should be weighed, every fact compared, and every consequence balanced. The citizens who delight in the prosperity of their country, feel a peculiar joy in knowing by severe experiment, that they have rulers who love peace and virtue, who believe facts and not misrepresentations, who look to the good of their country, who disregard the flash of popular clamour, pass over trivial errors, and comprehend with perspicuity and precision, the means of national happiness.

It is the domestic survey of our country that affords peculiar satisfaction : for we find among us a spirit of enquiry that leads to truth ; we have among us, the principles of liberty and economy ; we have among us, every blessing and enjoyment of life. Our farmers and manufacturers, the source of our national wealth, are flourishing in their business.—Our merchants are bartering with all nations.—Population most rapidly increasing.—Manners and customs improving, and assimilating.—Schools and colleges multiplied and supported.—Science diffused to every class of citizens.—Our women, in the possession of their genuine rights, exercising their talents in the happy sphere of domestic duty, and conferring many blessings upon their country, by the amiableness of their manners and the prudence of their conduct. And by giving a dignity to morality and a respect to religion ; they insensibly steal devotion from the more careless heart of man. I can fairly congratulate the citizens of Connecticut, while from past experience they may anticipate the encreasing happiness of their country. I can fairly congratulate the patriot and the foldier, who fought and bled

for the prosperity which we now enjoy, upon principles which may baffle the poison of luxury and the efforts of iniquity. We may hail the day of independence, and carry our thoughts forward to the period, when our national debt, the price of liberty, will be paid, the object of our funds accomplished ; when much of the expence and many of the officers of government will be removed ; when we shall be able to accomplish every object which will be for our welfare ; whether in agriculture, commerce or manufactures ; when the principles of law and justice will be more accurately defined ; when our state and country will have a common jurisprudence, separate from the unweildly volumes, and perplexing authorities of British Courts ; when the proceedings of the judicial departments shall come nearer to the principles of equity : when sects and parties shall lay aside their animosities, their bigotry and superstition, and agree to walk together as brethren of the same family ; when genuine religion shall assume her native dignity, idle and mysterious theories cease, and forms and modes no longer be tenaciously embraced as the essentials of the worship of God ; when piety and virtue shall be esteemed as consisting more in doing than talking, more in practice than speculation ; when peace, knowledge, and happiness, shall pervade the multiplied millions of our country. Does the present age wish to hasten the happy period ? Let them support their government, educate their children, and reverence their religion, and their God.

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THE END.